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Hundreds of paedophiles are using sport clubs to prey on kids with at least one report EVERY DAY

Sunday People investigation reveals sex assault allegations are far more widespread than those reported in last year's abuse scandal at professional football clubs



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BY NICOLA FIFIELD
21:58, 29 APR 2017 | **UPDATED** 22:01, 29 APR 2017





Despite DBS checks, perverts slip through the net (posed by model) (Photo: E+)

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Hundreds of coaches and officials at sports clubs across the land have been probed over child abuse, a [Sunday People](#) investigation has found.

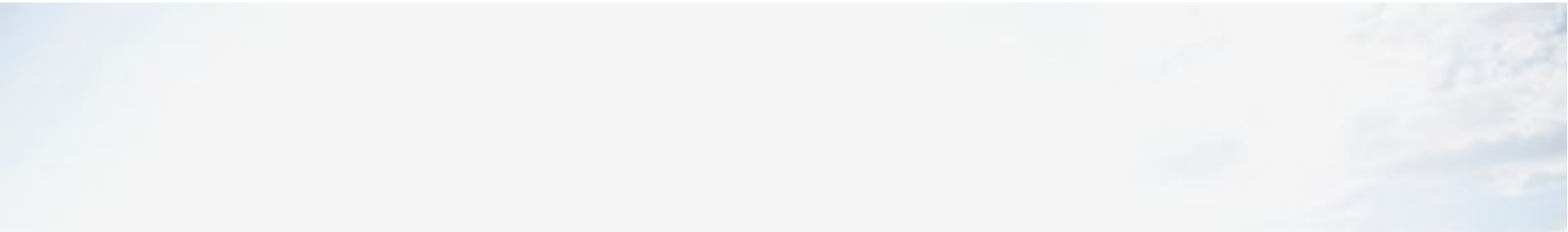
We can reveal that sex assault allegations are far more widespread than those reported in last year's [abuse scandal at professional football clubs](#).

The conclusions from our probe into every local authority in England and Wales are disturbing.

Swimming, martial arts, rugby and gymnastics are the four sports worst affected after football, followed by tennis, cricket and athletics.

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- Kids at risk from paedophiles because football chiefs are not doing enough to protect them, shock report finds





Abuse allegations are widespread (file photo) (Photo: Hero Images)

Parents will be horrified to learn that local authorities received the equivalent of one report of abuse **EVERY DAY** between 2012 and 2016.

More than half of these allegations were sexual. The remaining cases concern maltreatment such as physical and emotional abuse and neglect.

Ex-golfer Chris Unsworth, director of the Offside Trust which was set up by Chris and other sport sex abuse victims including footballer Andy Woodward, said: "It is shocking that the public has been kept in the dark about the scale of this problem."



Last night children's charity the NSPCC said our horrific findings proved that urgent action is needed to beef up Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

The charity wants to close two alarming loopholes that allow perverts to infiltrate sports

clubs.

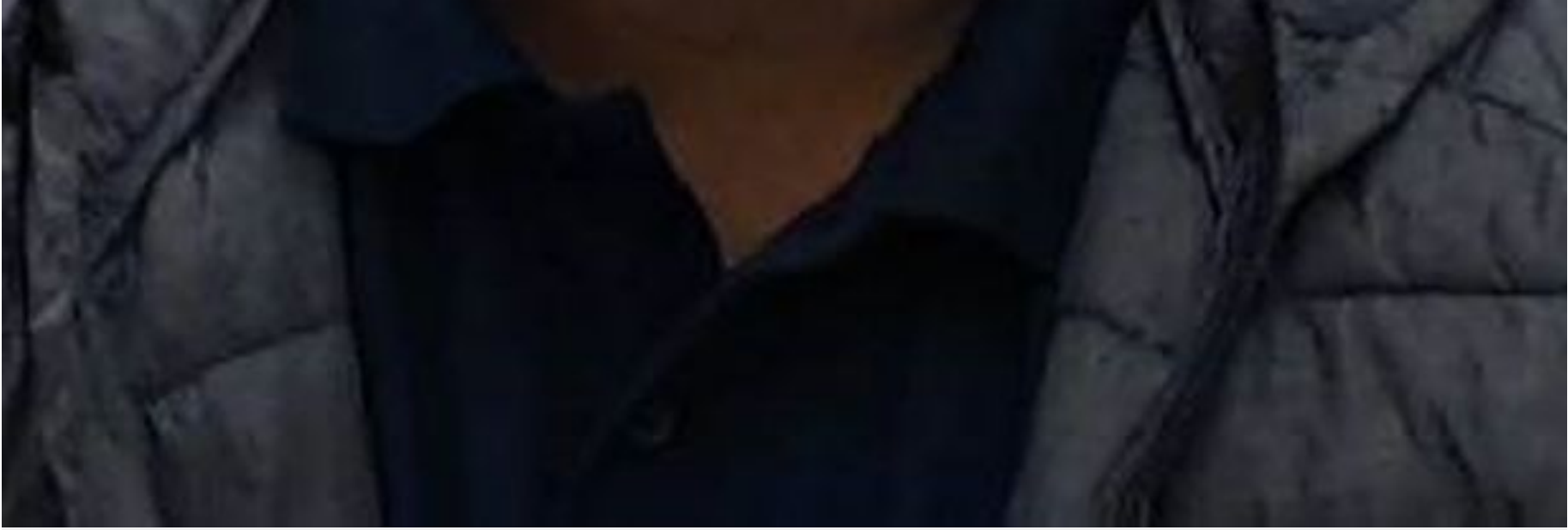
Offenders could lawfully have sex with 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds in their clubs because trust laws do not extend to sports coaches or youth leaders. Clubs can find out if a potential recruit is legally barred from working with children only if that person will be working unsupervised.

This means convicted sex offenders are able to get in by taking up assistant or support roles.

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► All five London-based Premier League clubs involved in historical sex abuse investigations, the Met announce





Hirusha Henricus has received 14 year prison sentence (Photo: Greater Manchester Police)

The latest pervert to be unmasked at a sports club is squash coach Hirusha Henricus, who was jailed for 14 years at Manchester crown court on Friday for a string of sickening offences including rape.

Henricus, 25, a coach at the city's National Squash Centre, preyed on ten teenage boys, including some he had access to as a coach.

The Sunday People asked all 174 local authorities in England and Wales for details of allegations involving abuse of children at sports clubs.

Three-quarters of the councils responded.

And according to our stats obtained under Freedom of Information laws, they dealt with 1,881 reports over five years.

That figure could be as high as 2,500 if it includes the 46 local authorities that didn't respond.

In two appalling cases in **WEST SUSSEX** a six-year-old child was sexually abused at a swimming club and multiple victims aged between six and 15 were abused at a gym. The offenders were prosecuted.

In **DURHAM** a tennis coach was sacked for sexual abusing and grooming a child. In **POOLE, DORSET**, a lifeguard was dismissed for abusing a 12-year-old boy.

Also in Poole, girls aged between 15 and 18 were sexually abused at a hockey and cricket club. The offender was sacked and convicted.

Other cases across the country included a paedophile being sacked from a karate club in **OXFORDSHIRE** for sexually abusing a teen and a pervert at a swim club in **BERKSHIRE**

being convicted of having indecent images.

BRISTOL city council dealt with a case involving children aged between ten and 15 who were sexually abused at a football club. Their abuser was convicted. In another case involving football, a paedophile was sacked from a club in **SWANSEA** following allegations of sexual abuse.

In the **LONDON** borough of Tower Hamlets, claims that a 16-year-old was sexually groomed at a judo club were referred to the sport's governing body.

In **LINCOLNSHIRE** a paedophile who preyed on under 16s at a rugby club was jailed.

In **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE** a swimming coach was sacked for sexually abusing an 11-year-old child.

Our investigation comes after the world of football was plunged into scandal last November with a series of former professionals revealing they were sexually abused as youth players.

The first to waive his right to anonymity was former Crewe, Bury and Sheffield United player Andy Woodward, 43.

After he spoke out, several other footballers followed suit, including former England and Tottenham midfielder Paul Stewart, 52, and ex-Manchester City striker David White, 49.



Stewart said he believed the sport could be facing a crisis on the scale of the Jimmy Savile scandal.

A hotline was set up and investigations are being co-ordinated by the National Police Chiefs' Council. So far 252 suspects and 560 victims have been identified.

But the Sunday People investigation using local authority records shows the scandal stretches across virtually every sport.

Offside Trust boss and former victim Chris Unsworth said: "Too often we have been told that our horrific experiences could not be repeated today.

"But these new revelations prove that we must do more to keep our children safe."

Chris added that it was likely our figures represent only the tip of the iceberg as many victims will not have spoken to the authorities.

A spokesman for the NSPCC, which is fighting to close loopholes in the checking system, said: "We want the Government to extend trust laws – which do not apply to sports coaches or other youth leaders – so they cannot lawfully have sex with 16 and 17-year-olds in their care."

Under child protection laws every council must have a designated officer to co-ordinate the response to fears that an adult working with children may have caused harm.

All allegations that come to the attention of an employer or made directly to the police must be immediately reported to the designated officer.

Chief Constable Simon Bailey, the police chiefs' head of child protection, said: "We urge anyone who may have been a victim of child sexual abuse to report it by dialling 101 or contacting the NSPCC helpline, regardless of how long ago the abuse may have taken place.

"We can guarantee that we will listen and treat all reports sensitively and seriously."

Sick reign of soccer ref on teen players



Shameless Johnathan Bedford (Photo: Twitter)

Youth football coach and referee Johnathan Bedford was locked up last year for a string of sickening offences against teenage boys including rape.

The 34-year-old, who met his victims through his involvement with youth football in Lincolnshire, also persuaded young boys to send him indecent photos of themselves.

He was jailed for 11 and a half years and placed on the sex offender register for life. Lincoln crown court heard how Bedford had wrecked the life of the 18-year-old lad he had raped.

The offences, which related to the period between September 2008 and December 2010, involved 10 teenage boys.

Sentencing Bedford, Recorder Graham Huston told him: "I see no indication of remorse. No apology. No regret.

"You are a thoroughly selfish man who never once sought to consider the damage you were causing.

"Everything you did, you did to get the opportunity of a sexual encounter.

"The Football League and all the other referees and coaches who give up so much of their time to support youth football have been let down by you."

Lives ruined by gym fiend

Gym coach Leslie Oliver preyed on young girls he was training and subjected them to appalling sexual abuse.

The 58-year-old was jailed for 12 years for a catalogue of assaults against five girls aged between five and 15 in Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, Herts.

His offending spanned 38 years, from the 1970s to the present.

He attacked them during training sessions, in his bedroom at home, in his car, at a school and in a local park.

One of his victims bravely told St Albans crown court, Herts, how he used friendship as a facade for abuse, giving them lifts in his car.

Oliver, from Swansea, was told by Judge Andrew Bright: "What you did to each of those girls has had a profoundly damaging effect on each of their lives."


"You took their innocence and ruined their childhood."


NSPCC's six club tips for worried parents

- 1. Find out if the club has a child protection policy with a clear procedure for dealing with concerns about possible abuse, and ask to view it.
- 2. A well-run club will welcome questions about their activities and policies. They know they have a responsibility to give information to anyone who leaves a child in their care.
- 3. Check if the club has a written code of behaviour showing what is required of staff, volunteers and participants.
- 4. There should be guidelines about physical contact and social activities between staff, volunteers, children, and parents.
- 5. Ask whether all staff and volunteers have been selected through a proper process of interviews, references and police checks.
- 6. All staff and volunteers should have up-to-date safeguarding training and your child's coach should have a recognised qualification that includes child-protection training.


NSPCC'S HELPLINE: [0800 023 2642](tel:08000232642)


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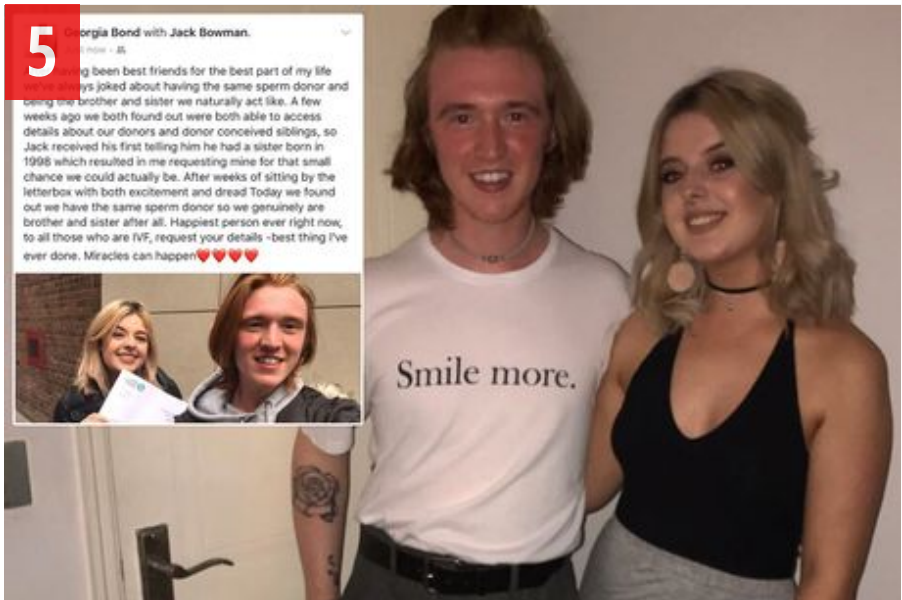
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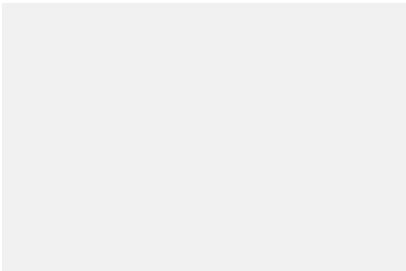


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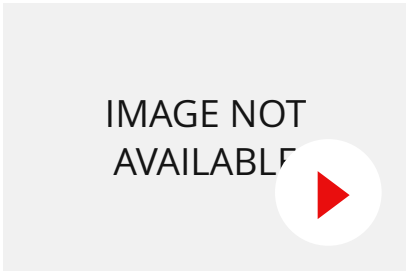
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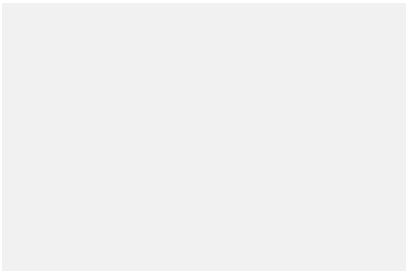
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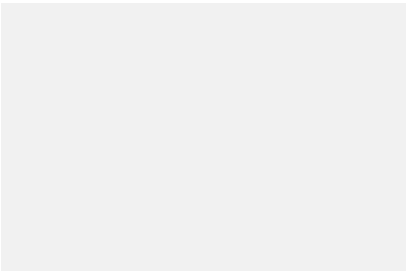
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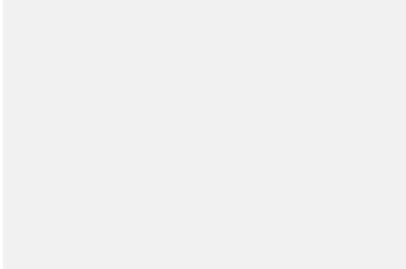
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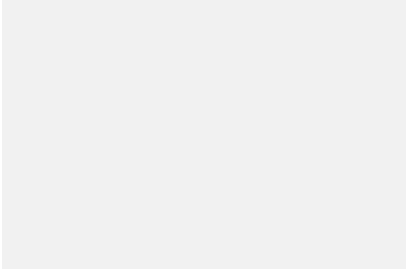
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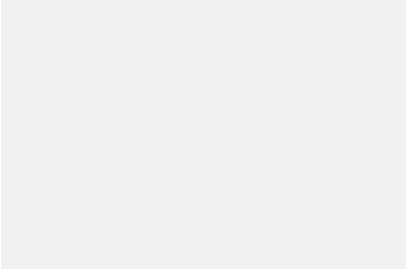
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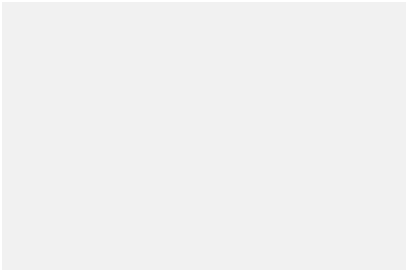
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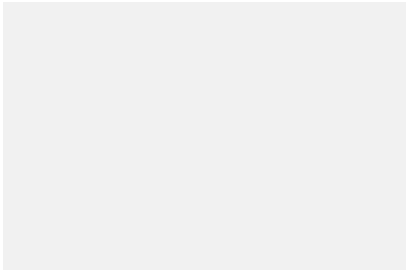
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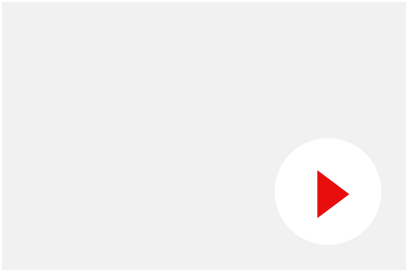
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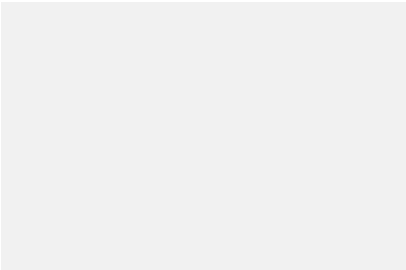
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